

SEVEN DAYSIES



2009 GUIDE TO READERS' PICKS

7

the best in:

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SEVEN DAYSIES

2009 GUIDE TO READERS' PICKS



Seven is our favorite number, for obvious reasons. So this seventh consecutive iteration of the Daysies makes us extra happy about doling out awards. No doubt the people who win them will feel the same — especially those who've won every single time. Getting bored yet, you pervs? Didn't think so.

What really blew us away this year was the sheer number of readers who voted — 3690, to be exact — and the vast majority of them used our online survey. As we've told you before, it really helps with the arithmetic when you can capture the answers from a website and dump them into a spreadsheet. Our staff pizza-and-beer counting night is a nodding memory, and to replace it we all get together and recite poems from memory.

Kidding about that last part.

Anyway, regular readers will find many familiar names here. That's because a lot of individuals and businesses are unfailingly popular and, as luck would have it, are still alive. Some dueling competition just seem to swap places each year, so the surprise is in finding out who took home the Daysie and who was runner-up. But, trust us, there were a few upsets in 2009.

To effect the hegemony of population-heavy Chittenden County, we included more "Outside" categories this year wherever the number of votes justified it. That unheeded in a whole host of new winners, primarily in central Vermont.

And, as usual, we introduced some new categories, changed the wording of a few classics, and eliminated others altogether. This fluctuation inevitably upsets somebody, but there's usually a net gain on the happy side. If you're in the former camp, please accept our condolences.

Thanks to the community of readers and advertisers who contribute to making Vermont the "best" in so many ways, and who are helping this independent, locally owned media enterprise survive in a very challenging time. Like we always say, without you we'd be pushing up You-Know-What.

PAMELA POLSTON

"THOUGHT" QUESTIONS

Those of you who voted in the Daysies may recall the questions at the end of the survey: *What one change would make Vermont a better place to live? Who's your Vermont local hero? Who should be Vermont's next governor?*

Not surprisingly, the answers were all over the map — you Vermonters are such snowbirds, South Poles would be proud of you if it weren't for that pay-attempt thing. But we'll attempt to summarize them here.

What one change would make Vermont a better place to live?

Most responses earnestly address substantive issues facing the state: health care for all, more affordable housing, lower taxes, more jobs, better public transportation, etc. Of course, another sizable contingent mentioned the weather. As in: more sunshine. Looking at last year's Daysies write-ups, we noted the words "rainiest summer ever." Really? It couldn't have been a cardie to this one.

Plenty of people are still stilled about the state of the roads, so they must not live on Pine Street in Burlington, which has been undergoing improvements all summer. A few independent types still think seceding from the U.S. would make everything all better, but even more are certain that legalizing marijuana would do the job.

Real Mexican food, Rhinogone food, free trash removal and better cell service all made the list. We're still pending over "more people from New Jersey and Sweden." How would that help, exactly?

Oh, and to the person who asked, "Do you really read all of these?" — the answer is yes.

Who's your Vermont local hero?

This one's pretty much a tie between our two U.S. senators, **Patrick Leahy** and **Ronnie Souders**. Not that they aren't both deserving, but, boy, there's nothing like name recognition. 'Cause the runner-up are former Governor **Howard Dean** and Capt. **Richard Phillips** —

you know, the Underhill resident who offed himself as hostage to Somali pirates to save his *Weekend Update* crew, and then was rescued by some sharp-shooting Navy SEALs. Dude is truly a hero, and got a whole lot of deserved media coverage for it.

Still, quite a few readers saw fit to name relatively lesser beings. We're willing to concede heroism may come in many guises, but the *Laguna*? *Huge*? *Chump*? Please. Can we at least stick to mortals?

A few voters threw props to their local police and fire departments, often named "my husband" or "my wife." Awwe.

We kind of liked the person — somewhat deadish, but with unassailable goodness — who wrote, "Is Fred Battle still alive? If not, then *Burr*." Answer: Fred is dead, but the *Burr*-bridge sweater was, in his own way, some kinda hero.

Who should be Vermont's next governor?

Again, name recognition helps a lot — most of the individuals who've thrown their hats in the ring for the next gubernatorial election got some nods. We have to reveal that Sen. **Doug Raczine** came out ahead, though the Chittenden County Democrat played second fiddle to one answer: anyone but *Daughter*. Seriously. We certainly wouldn't pin all of Vermont's problems on our current governor, but it seems to be popular to blame him anyway. Then again, *Seven Days* readers may well be a biased bunch.

Some other candidates to contemplate, according to our voters, are the collective "ladies" of the *House of LeMay*, Burlington artist **dog NAF**, actor **Christian Bale** (inspired, perhaps, by his YouTube-captured *driving* to shoot applicants into submission, and assuming he would take up residence in Vermont), and "that guy with all the colorful trash on his bike," who perhaps only Burlington residents will recognize as the so-called **Bird Man**. And no way are we giving him up to Montpelier.

Of course, we've got our favorite answer: "Some really smart ppl" and "Dr. Allen. He counts." Um, counts who? @

— P.J.



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FOOD & DRINK



TRATTORIA DELIA MANAGER JEREMY VENDITTO
AND HOSTESS KATE BOLTON

Best Special Occasion Restaurant (Inside Chittenden County); Best Italian Restaurant

TRATTORIA DELIA

Burlington

PASTA PERFECTION

With a cozy, fire-kissed dining room, a legendary wine list and a menu that doesn't quit, Trattoria Delia has long been a go-to place for local-come Dilepholans and couples in search of romance. And what better way to get acquainted than over grilled shrimp and white beans with arugula, a shared plate of house-made gnocci in a tomato-basil butter sauce, and the famous fllet mignon — broiled in red wine and demi-glace and topped with truffle butter?

The gracious, helpful service doesn't hurt, either: owner Tim and Lori Delia ensure that all new servers get a crash course in the spirited styles of Italian wines. For fall, in season, much of the restaurant's produce comes from the Delia family garden.

SUZANNE PODHAIZER

Best Place to Have Dinner, Best Breakfast/Brunch Outside Chittenden County; Best Après-Ski

STOWE MOUNTAIN LODGE

MOUNTAIN MAJESTY

These days, it's easy to source local ingredients for small neighborhood restaurants and intimate fire-dining destinations, but finding enough to supply a mountain hotel is another matter. Nevertheless, Stowe Mountain Lodge's executive chef, Sean Buchanan, makes it happen. Soak up the lodge's gorgeous restaurant, boasts sky-high ceilings, artworks by local artists and a menu that hits 38 sets, ranging from classic makers such as Cobb Hill and Woodcock Farm to veggie growers and vineyards.

The goods are used in upscale preparations such as truffled beef tartare and lamb with thyme broth, carrots, greens and potatoes. They also make their way into casual fare, such as the \$18 Vermont Burger with fries and a handful of rustic flatbreads served at the resort's casual Hangout, which claims the post-dinner hit action as well.

SUZANNE PODHAIZER

Legend holds that the number seven is magical, and for a handful of area restaurants it most certainly is. Previous few have won every single year since the Dayles awards began.

Penny Lane is among them. A favorite with locals and "hobblers" alike — Brijn Wood of *Leaf of the Ring* fame has been spotted there on a number of occasions — the a hot spot dishes up flavorful fare with flair. The fresh-squeezed tangerine juice alone is worth a trip.

Then there's veggie-friendly **Stone Soup**. The café, named for a children's story about sharing, certainly isn't sharing these first-place Dayles. **Nicabellies** has dominated the Bakery category, and **City Market** invariably wins for Best Natural Foods — inside Chittenden County, that is.

Though it's great to see local favorites score year after year, touring fresh ingredients

into the mix keeps things interesting. So this year we sprinkled in a few new categories and tweaked some old ones.

Patrons must really love the Chicken Tikka Masala and Lamb Kebab at **India House** in Burlington. Why? It was for Best Ethnic Cuisine, Non-Asian. Never mind that India is, in fact, part of Asia. **Trattoria Delia** picked up the first-ever prize for Best Italian Restaurant, plus one for Best Special Occasion Restaurant. The much-publicized fact that designer Karl Lagerfeld ate there three times in a week probably didn't hurt.

Despite not serving Italian-style pies, **American Flatbread** has been snaking away with the Best Pizza award since 2005. To let other players get in the game, we introduced Best Pizza Delivery to the mix. **Leonardo's Pizzeria**, which dishes up flavorful rounds in flavors such as Federal Sausage Gouster and Louisiana Cajun Chicken, took the provincial cake.

Would you believe that the once-popular **Leon's** earned its first Dayle this year? The bistro, which scored for Best Lunch in the county, has plenty of al fresco seating on Church Street and a mix of traditional French fare such as soupe au pistou and contemporary American dishes, including Duck Confit "Sticky Joe." Even during the day, fat-cat restaurateurs can add \$500, lobster tail and truffled potatoes to any dish although it's not unusual for a single restaurant to show in a couple of different categories; 2009 gave us a triple threat in the form of the new **Stowe Mountain Lodge**. The All-rounder property, which boasts **Solstice** — a fancy restaurant — took home the gold for Best Breakfast/Brunch and Best Dinner outside Chittenden County, while the resort's casual **Hangout** bar won for Best Après-Ski. Sounds like the place's regulars are just as loyal as the lingering patrons of the Hotel California.

What other eateries are banking in Seven Dayles love? Read on.

SUZANNE PODHAIZER



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AT STOWE
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FOOD & DRINK



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Best Pizza Restaurant (Outside Chittenden County) **POSITIVE PIE AND POSITIVE PIE 2**

Plainfield, Montpelier

FLYIN' HIGH

Celeo Rosetta, owner of Positive Pie (Plainfield) and Positive Pie 2 (Montpelier), has miles of restaurant experience — he's been working in the industry since he was 18 years old. But he's also got a spiritual streak: The Crystal City locale is decorated with crystals and images of Buddha.

The pizzeria's original spot is a modest place to get a pie or a slice, but PIZ, which opened in 2006, is a full-fledged restaurant, bar and lounge. There's still plenty of 'za, including Malabarra with eggplant, fresh mozzarella and pesto, but patrons can sample other Italian specialties such as spinach-farol Steak Fiorentina and Pork Marengo with risotto.

Wine to eat Friday or Saturday night on a "positive" note? Swing a Hot & Dirty Martini — made of Absolut Pepper, olive juice and vermouth — or a Cucumber Seltzer while taking in live music at the bar.

SUZANNE PODHAIZER

SEVEN DAYSIES 2009 GUIDE TO READERS' PICKS

Best place to have dinner

INSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

- [W] American Flathead (Burlington North)
- [R] Lucca's Bites & Cafe (Burlington)

OUTSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

- [W] Solstice at Stone Mountain Lodge
- [R] Serenata (Montpelier)

Best special-occasion restaurant

INSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

- [W] Trattoria Delta (Burlington)
- [R] A Single Pebble Restaurant (Burlington)

OUTSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

- [W] Horn of the Wind (Waterbury)
- [R] Solstice at Stone Mountain Lodge

Best Asian restaurant

INSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

- [W] A Single Pebble Restaurant (Burlington)
- [R] Topy Thai (Rutland)

Best ethnic cuisine (non-Asian)

INSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

- [W] India House (Burlington)
- [R] Nader's Restaurant & Cantina (Burlington)

Best Italian restaurant

INSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

- [W] Trattoria Delta (Burlington)
- [R] Three Tomatoes (Burlington)

OUTSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

- [W] Serenata (Montpelier)

Best veggie fare

INSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

- [W] Stone Soup (Burlington)
- [R] Mayfield's Breakfast & Lunch Nitre (Burlington)

OUTSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

- [W] Transit (Montpelier)
- [R] Skaggsby Natural Foods (Montpelier)



PHOTO: MATT/WWW.BBIP.COM

The Best Way to Dine **TASTING MENUS**



BITE SIZED

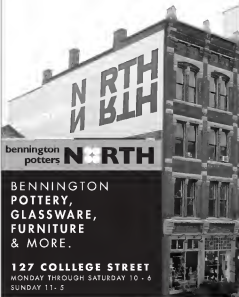
Nowadays, many Vermont restaurants offer prix-fixe menus, which allow diners to sample a handful of courses for less than it would cost to order them à la carte. But foodies looking for an over-the-top eating experience have another, rarely advertised option: a chef's tasting menu.

If you call well in advance and make a special request, many fine chefs will enthusiastically prepare a five- or even seven-course meal composed of bites of their best offerings. Sampling dishes not listed on the regular menu is part of the thrill, as is knowing that the chef is paying special attention to your food. At the end, assuming you're pleased, don't forget to send the kitchen your compliments.

For a serious dose of awe, gourmands need look no further than The Pitcher Inn in Warren. There, the chef's tasting isn't offered in the dining room. Instead, those who wish to partake sit at the wine cellar's sole table (pictured above), where servers and sommeliers attend to their every need. This is awesome.

SUZANNE PODHAIZER

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FOOD & DRINK

SEVEN DAYSIES 2009 GUIDE TO READERS' PICKS

Best breakfast/brunch

INSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

- (W) Pease Glass Café (Burlington)
(R) Magnolia Breakfast & Lunch Bar (Burlington)

OUTSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

- (W) Solstice at Stone Mountain Lodge
(R) Kismet (Montpelier)

Best place to do lunch

- (W) Leaning Station & Grill (Burlington)
(R) The Skinny Pancake (Burlington)

Best late-night food

- (W) Country Root Deli (Burlington)
(R) Nectar's (Burlington)

Best pizza restaurant

INSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

- (W) American Railroad Burlington Tavern
(R) Jason's Italian (Colchester, Burlington)

OUTSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

- (W) Positive Pie (Plattsburgh/Montpelier)
(R) Pizzeria (Stowe)

Best pizza delivery

- (W) Leonardo's Pizzeria (Burlington)
(R) Jason's Italian (Colchester, Burlington)

Best brew pub

INSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

- (W) Kismet Pub & Brewery (Burlington)
(R) American Railroad Burlington Tavern

OUTSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

- (W) The Alchemist (Waterbury)
(R) The Shed (Stowe)

Best Vermont microbrewery

- (W) Maple Hill Brewing Company (South Burlington)
(R) Switchback (Burlington)

Best bar

INSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

- (W) Red Square (Burlington)
(R) 1/2 Lounge (Burlington)

OUTSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

- (W) The Alchemist (Waterbury)
(R) Ringless at Stone Mountain Lodge

Best après-ski

- (W) Stone Mountain Lodge
(R) [tie] The Nutcracker & The Shed (Stowe)

Best coffee/teahouse

INSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

- (W) Muddy Waters (Burlington)
(R) Deconstruct Grounds (Burlington)

OUTSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

- (W) Capital Grounds (Montpelier)
(R) Langdon Street Café (Montpelier)

Best Veggie Fare (Outside Chittenden County) KISMET

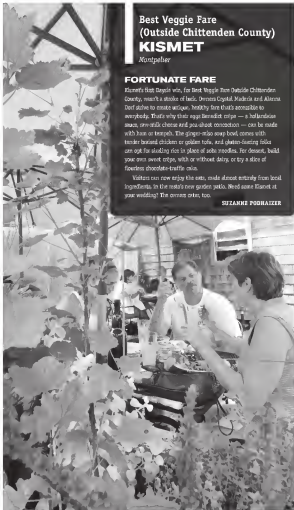
Montpelier

FORTUNATE FARE

Kismet's first Veggie win, for Best Veggie Fare Outside Chittenden County, wasn't a stroke of luck. Owner Crystal Maderik and Alanna Deit strive to create unique, healthy fare that's accessible to everybody. That's why their egg benedict crisp — can be made with ham or tempeh. The ginger-miso soup bowl, comes with tender baked chicken or golden tofu, and gluten-freeing folks can opt for steaming rice in place of soba noodles. For dessert, build your own sweet crisp, with or without dairy, or try a slice of flourless chocolate-truffle cake.

Visitors can now enjoy the eats, made almost entirely from local ingredients, in the restaurant's new garden patio. Need some Kismet at your wedding? The owners cater, too.

SUZANNE PODHAIZER



Best Brew Pub & Best Bar (Outside Chittenden County) THE ALCHEMIST

Waterbury

CHEERS FOR BEERS

Brewers at The Alchemist may not be able to convert lead into precious metal, but they can turn malt, hops and water into liquid gold. Their flavorful beers, including the Belgian-style Nitroge & Tonic and the Party Dogger, an American IPA, are known far and wide. Area chefs stop in after work for a pint, and patrons have been known to drive all the way from Burlington for the goods.

But fermented fluid isn't the only draw: The flavorful pub fare rules 'em in, too. Golden bread-eat fries, served on a paper cone with spicy ketchup or garlic mayo for dipping, are crisp and delicious. For something heartier, there's always the sausage and 'kmat plate, or a Porter Braised Chicken Leg with herb potatoes. Like beer for dessert, too? You can't go wrong with Maple-Porter Pudding Cakes.

SUZANNE PODHAIZER



Hey Seven Days' Readers! Thanks for the Votes!



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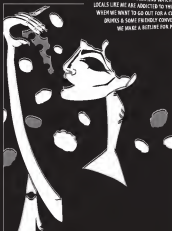
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**SEVEN DAYSIES
READERS' PICK**

NOODLES

- Copper Well Noodles
(with shrimp, Chinese greens)
- Wok Tossed Lo Mein
(with roasted pork, chicken, tofu
or seafood)
- Hong Kong Noodles & Yu Choy
(with roasted pork, chicken, tofu,
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- Chow Fun: Fresh wide rice noodle
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County)
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GROUNDS**

Montpelier

THE BEAN SCENE

Vermont has no shortage of places to get paxed on java, but Montpelier's Capitol Grounds, on State Street not far from the Golden Diner, is a longstanding favorite. With its own roasty eatery and plenty of things to eat, the cafe is a hot spot for politicos, students and tourists alike. Some pop in for something to go, while others hang out for hours with their laptops, enjoying the view.

Conscious coffee drinkers, take note: Capitol Grounds uses Fair Trade-certified beans, which are often organic as well. If you want to sip something more soothing, there are teas, Italian sodas and juices, too.

SUZANNE PODHAIZER

SEVEN DAYSIES

2009 GUIDE TO READERS' PICKS

Best bakery

INSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY
[W] Minkelles (Burlington)
[RD] Elmer's Bread (South Burlington)

OUTSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY
[W] Red Hen Bakery & Cafe (Middlesex)
[RD] La Sencio Bakery (Montpelier)

Best natural foods market

INSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY
[W] City Market (Burlington)
[RD] Healthy Living (South Burlington)

OUTSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY
[W] Hunger Mountain Co-op (Montpelier)

Tastiest takeout

[W] Ting Ting (Middlesex)
[RD] Pho Hung (Burlington)

Best street eats

[W] The Sherry Pizzeria (Burlington)
[RD] Hung's Dumplings (Burlington)

Best wine seller

[W] Cheese Traders and Wine Sellers (South Burlington)
[RD] Burlington Wine Shop



**Best Place to Do Lunch
LEUNIG'S BISTRO & CAFÉ**

Burlington

STREET SAVVY

There's no better people watching in Vermont than on Burlington's Church Street Marketplace, and Leunig's allows patrons to soak up the scene in style. Jazz, cocktails and cozy French favorites only add to the ambience.

It's not all jazz at the 29-year-old eatery. Although Chef Donald Collier still dishes up classics such as Escargot Maitre and Coq au Vin, he gets creative, too. The lunch menu includes a house-made black-bean burger and, even more unusual, strawberry-and-cashew-crusted salmon with a drizzle of vanilla bean crème fraîche.

Known for generously greeting customers at the door, General Manager Bob Corbin presides over the front of the house with a smile, and ensures that the eatery gives back to the community by participating in fundraisers for worthy causes. Leunig's isn't just a place to grab lunch; it's a package deal.

SUZANNE PODHAIZER

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TRAIL MIX

When latecomers set out from the Trapp Family Lodge to ski the 60 groomed kilometers of Nordic trails, one question tends to be on their minds: Can we make it to the cabin? Tucked amid maple and spruce at the top of a gurgling slope, the Skytop Retreat Cabin offers hot drinks, a blazing fire, and the informal camaraderie of other folks who've made the climb on snowshoes or skis. More adventurous skiers get a workout on the 500 kilometers of thickly wooded backcountry trails before stopping their noses. But whether or not you make the cabin, it's easy to see why the resort's first full-service Nordic center consistently either wins the Day in or comes in right behind Williston's Catamount Family Center. First has booming, snow-matted mountains and a cabin; the other, a sweeping clear-day prospect of Lake Champlain and the Adirondacks. Hard to lose.

MARGOT HARRISON

Talk about loyalty. If Vermont doesn't acquire more really good clubs, musicians, galleries and so on, certain people and places could very well go on winning every single year forever. Or at least as long as we continue to hand out Dayies. It's not that they aren't deserving. So, for their seventh Dayies, give a big hand to **Higher Ground** (Best Live Music Venue); **Club Metronome** (Best Dance Club); **Chris Sahajian** (Best Fiction Writer); the **Firehouse Gallery** (Best Art Gallery); **Frog Hollow** (Coolest Craft Gallery); and the town of **Stowe** (Best Weekend Getaway in Vermont). We're still wondering where Stowe residents go to get away. Maybe up the road to the new **Stowe Mountain Lodge**, which came in second? Or maybe they blow off steam at the **Krusty Mail**, which won "Best Dance Club Outside Chittenden County." In other words, they don't really leave town.

Seven Days readers are still beset with the **Shelburne Museum**, while **ECNO Lake Aquarium and Science Center** is a perennial second choice. The latter came out on top, though, in a new-this-year category: Best Place to Take Your Kids." Another Shelburne institution, the **Farms**, was runner-up. Must be that animal magnetism.

The **Barlington Discover Jazz Festival** returned to first place after last year's upset by the (now second place) **Vermont Brews Fest**. Similarly, **Stowe Mountain** asserted itself as the supreme snow slope after a brief tumble: last year's winner, **Sugarbush**, slid

into second. Shelburne's **Kwiniska** came back as Best Public Golf Course" — foot! — nudging out **Williston**. Those who just like to watch have reaffirmed the long winning streak of **Merrill's Roxy** as Best Movie Theater, while suburbanites put **Williston's Majestic 10** in second place.

Speaking of loyalty, **Grace Potter** has collected a bouquet of Dayies for Best Vocalist, though the runner-up got a new name this year: **Myra Flynn**, Burlington's soulful young chanteuse. For the last few years, *Seven Days* readers have flip-flopped between **Gordon Stone** and **Dave Griggs** as Best Instrumentalist, and this year the former, a banjo and pedal steel player extraordinaire, came in first. Maybe that augurs well for Stone's brand-new album, *Night Shocks*.

Voters are not nearly so decisive when it comes to Best Unsigned Vermont Band. This year we have an unprecedented three-way tie. Yes, three. And they are **Lowell Thompson & Crown Pilot**, the **Dirty Blenders** and **Michetti** (named for its scuzzing guitarist, Chris Michetti, formerly of Rag). It's an eclectic lineup — alt-country, punk and hard rock, respectively — and we think they should all go on tour together. During the stage changes, number-one **DJ A-Dog** could keep the party going.

Congrats to the lot.

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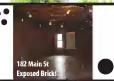
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THE OTHER PLACE

Further Reading



BAR NONE

Sometimes you want to go where everybody knows your name. And sometimes you want to go where everybody should know your friends' names, doesn't it. In life as in the Seven Days of Awe, there are winners and losers. And while we celebrate the former, we can't help but lament the latter. In either case, there's no better time in which to raise a glass or drown your sorrows than the dark neighborhood dive bar. In my neighborhood, that bar is The

Other Place, aka The G&L. From daily drink specials to stale popcorn, from the garage-door front windows to the dank recesses by the pool table, it offers a place for quietly hipsters and grained barflies alike to toast life's triumphs or commiserate in its little injustices. Because at The G&L, there is always the next beer.

DAN BOLLES

SEVEN DAYSIES

Best live music venue

- [W] Higher Ground (South Burlington)
[NU] Nectar's (Burlington)

Best dance club

INSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY
[W] Club Netronics (Burlington)
[R] Higher Ground (South Burlington)

OUTSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

- [W] Rusty Nail (Straw)
[W] London St. Cafe (Montebello)

Best instrumentalist

- (W) Gordon Store
(NU) Dove Gappa

Best vocalist

- (W) Game Butler
(M) Mya Fagan

Best unsigned Vermont band

- [TW] (3 way tie) Dicky Elander, Lowell Thompson & Crown Plot, Chris Michetti

Best club DJ

- [W] A-100
[P] cRANG MATTHELL

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Best Dance Club (Outside Chittenden County)

**THE RUSTY NAIL
BAR & GRILLE**

Stevens

RUST BELT

As a longer stride went toward, "The best thing about Washington is that it's so close to Vermont." While the Queen City may be the state's cultural and economic center, real estate isn't exactly lacking for "city" amenities, especially where entertainment is concerned. In particular, Snow — aka Little Aspen — boasts a smorgasbord of nighttime hotspots to suit most any taste. And their crown jewel is undoubtedly the Rusty Red Bull & Grill on the Mountain Road. The enormous après-ski destination is a forest of locals and tourists alike, featuring an enormous dance area, a hoty menu, a giant snow-maid, an "epi-ski" live entertainment on weekends. And the late-night bar isn't relegated to winter; the joint is jamming in the warmer months, too. But at least it will be, after ongoing renovations are complete.

DAN HOLLES



Best Place to Be During a Snowstorm GENERAL STARK MOUNTAIN

Mad River Glen

UPS AND DOWNS

Pictan this! It's been pelted snow for the past 24 hours. The roads are a sloppy mess. I've got a to-do list three pages long. Snow #6 is going down. And on days like this, only one place makes me cray with anticipation: the runs off the single chair at Mad River Glen.

When the rushed bandaid of muffins and Oatlands, the white-knuckle drive up Route 17 and the frantic back bedding are behind me, I fold myself onto the lonely one-seater, and a profound peace comes over me. It's so

quiet. I can hear the snowflakes piling up in my lap. The cellphone is off. Good is a laughable trifle. There's nothing to think about now but the run down.

Higher and higher, past the midstation and deep into a whitout, the silence is broken by hoots of delight coming from some vague wonderland to my right. A silver floater beneath me, leaving a contrail of cold vapor. I lick my lips and pump my fingers. This is going to be good.

KIRK KARDASHIAN



Best Place to Go Barefoot SHELburne MUSEUM

Shelburne

TOE TRUCKIN'

When your digits get a hankering for some cool soil, look no further than the soft western slopes of the Shelburne Museum, where Higher Ground holds its Concerts on the Green summer music series. The grassy field provides just enough trudge without the jock of jagged pine cones or pebbles. When the setting sun warms the tops of your feet and the evening's gathering dew cools your soles, it's like nature's lay flat. If you're sensible, there are plenty of opportunities for hoof consoling. Bare-footie, argue? Oh, and don't worry about bogging this grass. There's plenty to go around, and it's legal.

MIKE DIASIO



SEVEN DAYSIES YOUR GUIDE TO READERS' PICKS

Best visual artist

(W) Amy SLP
(R) Kathleen Montross

Best art gallery

(W) Harbour Gallery (Burlington)
(R) Frog Hollow (Burlington)

Coolest craft gallery

(W) Frog Hollow (Burlington)
(R) Candice & Co. (South Burlington)

Best movie theater

(W) Merrill's Romy Theater (Burlington)
(R) Mystic 10 (Williston)

Best museum

(W) Shelburne Museum
(R) RCR Lake Aqueduct and Science Center (Burlington)

Best Vermont festival

(W) Burlington Discover Jazz Festival
(R) Vermont Brewers Festival (Burlington)

Best Vermont fiction writer

(W) Chris Bohjalian
(R) Archer Mayne

Best public golf course

(W) Kennesha (Shelburne)
(R) Williston Golf Club

Superlative snow slope

(W) Snow Mountain Resort
(R) Sugarbush

Best x-country ski area

(W) Topsy Family Lodge (Stowe)
(R) Lutescent Family Center (Williston)

Best getaway weekend in Vermont

(W) Snow (Stowe)
(R) Snow Mountain Lodge

Best place to take your kids

(W) RCR Lake Aqueduct and Science Center (Burlington)
(R) Shelburne Zoo

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MEDIA & POLITICS



Best Vermont Blog, Nonpolitical HOUSE OF LEMAY

LEMAY DAY

Vermont hasn't had a *GLBT* newspaper since *Out* in the Mountains folded in 2006, but the blog maintained by the House of LeMay is the next best thing. You won't find much serious reporting on the LeMay site — it's written by Amber and Lucille LeMay, two drag queens who claim to hail from the Hot Damn Trailer Park in the fictional town of Beaver Ford, Vt. But if you're curious about local gay culture, this blog is a surprisingly informative source. The LeMays post photos from and comments about every gay-themed event they attend, and they do get around. Hey, do they ever. If there's a rainbow flag flying in Burlington, you can count on them to find it — and blog about it.

CATHY RESNER

We blush to note that Seven Days readers voted, well, *Seven Days* the Best Vermont Publication. You didn't have to, but we're glad you did. Likewise for selecting political columnist **Shay Totien** and staff writer **Ken Picard** first and second, respectively, for Best Print Journalist. This is an era of shrinking — and disappearing — media outlets; we honor all the journalists still fighting the good fight, and we don't take anything for granted. Still, we enjoy acrobatics as much as the next guy. Like, say, **Tom Messner**. The WP72 meteorologist has more than a winning smile — he's got seven Dayites! Guess no one's blaming him for this summer's monsoon.

Another popular figure on the little screen will soon be leaving it. Longtime WCAX News Director **Marcelle Parsons** is stepping down after 42 years at the station in various roles; he's been running the show since 1984. Who will win the Dayite next year for "Best TV newscaster"? We shall see, but meanwhile, Parsons can pick up another one on his way to retirement. Bet he'll be happy if no one ever asks him again, "What's new?"

"Local first" sure applies to the fiberoptic world: **Burlington Telecom** won firsts, by a huge margin, for both Best Cable TV Provider and Best Internet Provider. The giant Comcast was runner-up in each category. And, speaking of hometown talent, real, flesh-and-blood personalities **Mike & Chantal** (Carry and Puzino) won their first Day-

ite for Best Local Radio DJ, though they're sharing the tribute with their sidekick, **Kaiser**. The morning-show folks at 95 Triple X serve up "stupid news," gossip, phone scams, contests, horoscopes, general silliness and, yes, music before some of us have had our first cup of coffee. Hope the Dayites party isn't past their bedtime.

Seven Days readers may have a penchant for any DJ, but they still chose the much cooler **Vermont Public Radio** for Best Radio Station. Maybe they like their actual news to be smart.

And, speaking of intelligentsia, both the state's reigning political blogs consistently prove the thought, but this year the *Green Mountain Daily* kept ahead of *Vermont Daily Briefing*, at least in the Dayites poll. Might it have something to do with GMD's lively comments section? Whatever. Keep it coming, scribes.

There's no question the *House of LeMay* will. The ladies slipped into first place for "Best Vermont blog (nonpolitical)," which has gotta be a drag for previous winner *Coffeeblog*. The site is mainly promotional for the bearded, high-heeled gals from the Hot Damn Trailer Park, though you can also find a calendar and commentary on GLBT activities in the area. In other words, plenty of pride. Bet they'll have swell outfits for the Dayites.

PAMELA POLSTON

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MIKE CHARNY,
CHANTAL PAULSON
AND KAISER

Best Local Radio DJ

MIKE & CHANTAL

(95 Triple X, Winooski)

MORNING MADNESS

Nike and Chantal (no last names needed) have made a career out of being, well, a little sophomoric. But that's not an issue for our readers, who voted the 95 Triple X disc jockeys the best radio personalities in Vermont. And just when you thought everyone in the Green Mountain State was tuned in to Vermont Public Radio, Nike and Chantal's stock in trade is *juvenile*—phone scans, “stupid news” and celebrity-sounding “entertainment news.” Their trusty sidekick, Kaiser, retorts up the hot-house humor by taking on listener challenges such as dumpster diving for a rickroll, hitting the caps off glass beer bottles, and getting his ass out to plaster. Every so often, the hosts play a little music, too—Katy Perry, the Jonas Brothers and 101 Weyne are favorites. Then it's back to their on-air shtick—which might be as well worn as a hooden's high heels, but it still entertains.

LAUREN OBER

Best Political Spokesperson

PAUL HEINTZ

Washington, D.C.



In Vermont, it's easy to interview our elected officials, no matter how high up the political food chain they are. Heck, you can even run into them in the grocery store.

A go-to media spokesperson, aka “Fack,” serves as his or her buffer from media hounds. At the same time, these folks want to be a source for, and not a source of, sad media hounds. Otherwise, how's their boss gonna get some ink or screen time?

One of the best at this balancing act is Paul Heintz, spokesman for U.S. Rep. Peter Welch (D-VT). He joined Welch in November 2008, just after the congressman was elected to a second term.

A 2004 Dartmouth College grad, Heintz has been on the other side of the phone, too. He spent time as a reporter at the *Beverly Hills Gazette* and worked briefly on staff at such prestigious public news programs as “The Newsline” on PBS and NPR's “On the Media.”

Heintz is affable, understands deadlines, is willing to show the fit (all the record, so say good fack know) and, like every RD staffers, is available at nearly all hours of the day.

And, while Heintz pitches positive stories about his boss and issues a continuous stream of press releases, he'll also go the extra mile, tracking down other members of Congress, when necessary, to help round out a story.

How, that's service.

SHAY TOTTER

PAUL HEINTZ



PHOTO COURTESY OF PHILIP BARBUZA

SEVEN DAYS

2009 GUIDE TO READERS' PICKS

Best print journalist

- (W) Shay Totter (Seven Days)
(RD) Tom Pincus (Seven Days)

Best Vermont publication:

- (W) Seven Days
(RD) Vermont Life

Best TV Newscaster

- (W) Marisa Proulx (WCAX)
(RD) Darren Person (WCAX)

Best meteorologist

- (W) Tom Weaver (WPTO)
(RD) “Eye on the Sky” guys (WPTO)

Best cable/satellite TV provider

- (W) Burlington Telecom
(RD) Comcast



MEDIA & POLITICS



MEDIA & POLITICS

Best Seven Days Reader-Contributor **MOLLY HODGDON** South Burlington



CONSTANT COMMENTER

If you read *Seven Days* regularly, you probably recognize the name Molly Hodgdon. She's not part of our staff, but she's a frequent contributor: Molly writes letters to the editor, comments on our blogs, submits restaurant reviews on the 7 Mights website, gives us story ideas and occasionally appears in Ben Solberg's videos. She was also a finalist in our "What I Did for Money" contest in April—the one who had earned cash for mellowing and megalinguistic live fish.

Molly is a fan of *Seven Days*, but she's also one of our most vocal critics. A humor-mad aficionado, she recently took critic Rick Kizmek to task in the "Letters section" and an *Blatt*, our staff blog, for his review of *Drop Me to Hell*. Molly wasn't fond of Lauren Ober's review of a Quakercentennial reception at the Shelburne Museum, either. "Total damage," she wrote in a comment to Lauren's *Blatt* post. "Why did I'd send Larry the Cable Guy to an elegant cultural event?"

Unfortunately, the reason Molly has so much time to contribute is that she's disabled—she has systemic lupus. She recently quit a full-time job and left graduate school. "My brain is still going full-tilt," she tells us, "but I don't have school as an outlet, so I find that I'm writing and blogging and doing artwork and creating. I like to stay mentally active."

Read more of her writing on her own blog, *Medical Molly*, at www.medicalmolly.blogspot.com. Thanks, Molly, for keeping us honest.

CATHY RESNER



PHOTO: MATTHEW THORSEN

PHOTO: MATTHEW THORSEN



Best Candidate for Urban Renewal **CREEK FARM CENTER** Colchester



FIXER UPPER

Some madmen might misread a more visible community eyesore, such as the Kmart plaza in South Burlington, with its Volkswagen-sized potholes, fine-toothed driving patterns and personality-wrecking retail spaces. But when it comes to depressing commercial real estate, it's hard to find a sadder strip mall than the Creek Farm Center.

Never been there? What a shocker. This lonely outpost of asphalt and tumbledown is set back from the corner of Creek Farm Road and Route 2/7 in north Colchester, within spitting

distance of the Spanked Puppy bar, its anchor store, if you can call it that, or the Dollar General, sandwiched between the Bingo Palace and the InPark Mobile Home sales office and surrounded by 2000 square feet of Nobody's Store.

Nothing against Gaskin Day Center or the Daybreak Community Church, which probably keep the parking lot plowed all winter, but this center is howling for a makeover. Perhaps it's time for a new reality TV show: "Strip This Place!"

KEVIN PICARD

SEVEN DAYSIES 2009 GUIDE TO READERS' PICKS

Best local radio DJ

- [W] Mike & Charal (95 Triple X)
[RD] BJ Lee (98.9 The Beat)

Best radio station

- [W] Vermont Public Radio
[RD] 104.1 The Point

Best Vermont blog, political

- [W] www.greensessionandpolicy.com
[RD] www.vtcentralityblog.com

Best Vermont blog, non-political

- [W] www.houseoffairy.com
[RD] www.candiblog.com/candiblog

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SERVICES & STUFF

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Best Bike Shop (Inside Chittenden County) **SKIRACK** Burlington

TURN, TURN, TURN

Knee sick, yep. In recent years, the *Days*ies competition for best bike shop in Chittenden County has become almost as grueling as the Tour de France mountain stage, minus the doping scandals and hyperinflated eggs.

This year Skirack, on lower Nida Street, took home the yellow jersey, leading the pack among *Seven Days* readers and riders. With plenty of wicking wets, outdoor accessories and sundry sporting goods to choose from, the Rack tempts local cycling enthusiasts to pop in for its impressive selection of two-wheelers, whether they're in the market for a hub-bus BMX, a knobby-tired road bike, a tandem cruiser or a high-end road racer. And with a repair crew that's second to none, you won't even have to get your fingers greasy. Saddle up!

KEN PICARD

Businesses come and, sadly, often go. Others change locations or add another one. But the core stores remain strong, certainly for *Seven Days* readers. That's why we see so many familiar names again and again. Last year we acknowledged 12 businesses that had won six consecutive *Days*ies. In 2008, two of those — *Sweet Lady Jane* and *Imago* — moved to second place, bested by *Outdoor Gear Exchange* and *Good Stuff* for Best Place to Buy Women's Casual/Sportswear and Best Adult Toy Store, respectively. But maybe they'll follow the path of *Indigo*, which came back with a vengeance after last year's loss to *Stephen & Burns* for Best Hair Salon. (We can't help observing that the awardees of those two salons used to be named to each other. Coincidence?)

Some new names do appear this year, in part because we divided up a few categories geographically into inside and outside Chittenden County (see intro for explanation). That allowed Burlington's *Isabeau* to share space on the kiddie shelf with perennial Zutano for Best Children's Clothing; *The Man's Store* in Montpelier to join longtime winner *Michael Kahoe* for Best Men's Clothing; and the capital city's *Splash Naturals* to sit pretty with Burlington's *Mirror Mirror* for Best Beauty-product Purveyor. (The latter has a competitor in the form of the international chain *MAC Cosmetics*, which opened a shop last year on Church Street.)

In the return-to-first-place department, we also have *Sports & Fitness Edge* for Best Health Club and *Fucci Bridal* for, uh, Best Bridal Shop. *Full Tank* is back after we changed the category wedding (again) to Best Place to Buy a Pipe. In the reverse direction, *Lang McLaughry Spera* lost the *Days*ie deal to *Coldwell Banker Bickel & Boardman* for Best Real Estate Agency; *Old Spokes*

Home lost the race for Best Bike Shop to *SkiKark*.

No one trades places like *Topnotch* and *Stoweflake* for Best Spa — the two seem to alternate every year. In 2008, *Topnotch* is back on, well, top. But both have a serious competitor in the new kid up the road: *Stowe Mountain Lodge* has made its large presence known in several categories this year. In this section, the lodge scored into second place behind the indisputable Inn at Shelburne Farms for Best Vermont Wedding Venue.

Homeport, a perennial winner for Hottest Home-ware, also grabbed Best Furniture Store this year. Newcomer *Candles & Creations* snatched Grooviest Gift Shop from *Scribbles* — though the latter sits comfortably in first for Best Stationery.

Closing his downtown stare didn't prevent goldsmith *Timothy Geannis* from repeating his previous wins for Best Designer Jewelry; perhaps that bodes well for his new studio collective, *Akhenzy*.

As always, we came up with a few new categories this year. Let's start first first: Burlington's *Tooties* won its first *Days*ie for "Best manicure/pedicure." (And hey, there's that *Stowe Mountain Lodge* in second place. Who knew?)

Two other newbies reflect the times, and technology: Best Web Developer went to *Union Street Media*, with *Propeller Media Works* a close second. And the Best Vermont "Green" Business, according to *Seven Days* readers, is the earth-friendly home-products company *Seventh Generation*. Hinesburg's word-power people, *NRG Systems*, are runners-up. Way to go eco!

Congrats to winners old and new. Hope we see you all at the *Days*ies party.

PAKELA POLSTON

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Burlington

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KEN PICARD

SEVENTH GENERATION
CEO CRUK HARRIS/COURTESY

PHOTO: ANZIE DUBACK

about
ISABEAN OWNER
KATHERINE COHENBest Children's Store
(Inside Chittenden County)

ISABEAN CHILDREN'S BOUTIQUE

Burlington

KID STUFF

Don't be put off by the "boutique" in its name. Isabean isn't some fancy-toy shop that caters to the blue-blooded band with silver spoons and gilded potty seats. This locally owned store has been dressing and accessorizing Vermont's kids — from newborns to tweens — for the better part of five years. Since relocating from Williston to downtown Burlington late last year — it now occupies the former PhotoGarden building on College Street — Isabean has earned gold stars from Seven Days readers, whether they're seeking sundresses for the girls or track-bedded T-shirts for the lads. (Or vice versa — Isabean doesn't color-code our kids' genders.) Choo down, punk yourself on the hardwood floor and take a handmade wooden toy car for a test drive. Don't worry — we won't tell anyone.

KEN PICARD

SEVEN DAYSIES

2009 GUIDE TO READERS' PICKS

Best place to buy women's casual/sportswear

INSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

- [W] The Outdoor Gear Exchange (Burlington)
- [R3] Sweet Lady Jane (Burlington)

OUTSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

- [W] Ocean River Sports (Montpelier)
- [R3] Soliman Boutique (Montpelier)

Best place to buy women's evening wear

INSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

- [W] BCBG (Burlington)
- [R3] Sweet Lady Jane (Burlington)

OUTSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

- [W] Soliman Boutique (Montpelier)
- [R3] Decoywear (Vermont)

Best men's clothing

INSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

- [W] Michael Kolar (Burlington)
- [R3] Banana Republic (Burlington)

OUTSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

- [W] The Men's Store (Montpelier)

Best shoe store

INSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

- [W] Stella (Burlington)
- [R3] Danborn Shoes (Burlington, Shelburne)

OUTSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

- [W] The Shoe Store (Montpelier)
- [R3] Wei World (Stowe)

Best vintage/secondhand clothes

INSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

- [W] Old Field (Burlington)
- [R3] Battery Street Jeans (Burlington)

OUTSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

- [W] Isabean (Burlington)
- [R3] Burge Baby Shop (East Montpelier)

OUTSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

- [W] Autum (Montpelier)

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How 'cool' is your pet?

Once you know all the vet-approved ways to keep your pet cool and happy this summer, you can get on with the fun. Here are some tips to help you keep your pet cool and happy this summer.

Pro tip: Keep your pet cool and happy this summer by keeping them hydrated and protected from the sun.

Don't let your pet get too hot. If your pet is too hot, they may become lethargic or even collapse. If your pet is too hot, they may become lethargic or even collapse.

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SERVICES & STUFF



Best Men's Clothing (Outside Chittenden County) THE MEN'S STORE

Montpelier

For guys looking to deck themselves in something other than Carhartts and flannel, Vermont is a bit of a fashion desert, at least outside the Burlington area. That may be why Montpelier's The Men's Store opened last November "with a bang," according to Manager Matt Newman. In Bikerstock central, "Even the most laid-back dresser occasionally would like something to spruce up their wardrobe," she says. And the clientele has been as broad as it gets, from teens browsing local designer Eddie Adams' graphic T-shirts to a certain tax commissioner stocking up on professional separates. From urban streetwear to Calvin Klein suits, the styles are definitely diverse. The Men's Store was conceived by Salazar owner Andrea Mikala, who's started a line of men's shirts in her signature fabric. So, has Newman had the opportunity to turn any central Vermont hippies into hipsters? "A little bit," she says with a laugh. "One by one."

JANELA FULSTON

SEVEN DAYSIES

2009 GUIDE TO READERS' PICKS

Best spectacles

- (W) Eyes of the World (Burlington)
- (R) The Optical Center (Burlington)

Best designer jewelry

- (W) Tansley Gossens (Burlington)
- (R) Pennywink's Fine Jewelry (Burlington)

Best beauty-product purveyor

- INSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY
- (W) Maitre' Maitre' (Burlington)
- (R) MAC Cosmetics (Burlington)

Best pet store

- (W) Splash Networks (Montpelier)

Best pet store

- (W) The Food Warehouse (South Burlington, Shelburne)
- (R) Pet Advantage (South Burlington)

Best musical instrument store

- (W) Advanced Music Center (Burlington)
- (R) Gustafson (Montpelier)

Best record store

- INSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY
- (W) Pure Pop Records (Burlington)
- (R) Downtown Discs (Burlington)

Best record store

- OUTSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY
- (W) Back Square (Montpelier)
- (R) Riverside Records (Montpelier)

Best bookstore

- INSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY
- (W) Barnes & Noble (South Burlington)
- (R) Crow Bookshop (Burlington)

Best bookstore

- OUTSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY
- (W) First First Books (Montpelier)
- (R) Riverside Books (Montpelier)

Hottest housewares

- (W) Homeport (Burlington)
- (R) Kiss the Cook (Burlington)

Best furniture store

- (W) Homeport (Burlington)
- (R) Burlington Furniture Company

Best antique/secondhand store

- (W) Bicycle Works (Burlington)
- (R) Whistle Stop Antiques (Burlington)

Best lighting shop

- (W) Coaster Metal & Light (Burlington)
- (R) The Lamp Shop (Shelburne)

Grooviest gift shop

- (W) Candies & Confections (South Burlington)
- (R) Scabbies (Burlington)

Best photo shop

- (W) PhotoGenix (South Burlington)
- (R) Print Circus (Burlington)

Best computer store

- (W) Small Dog Electronics (South Burlington/Waterford)

Best place to rent a movie

- (W) (N) The Waterfront Video (Burlington, Middlebury)
- (R) Netflix (White River Junction)

Best internet provider

- (W) Burlington Telecom
- (R) Comcast

Best web developer

- (W) Union Street Media (Burlington)
- (R) Propriety Media Media (Burlington)

Best stationer

- (W) Scribbles (Burlington)
- (R) Ink Ink (Shelburne)

Best bridal shop

- (W) Patti Bridal (East Junction)
- (R) Shalene's Bridal Boutique (Montpelier)

Best wedding venue

- (W) Inn at Shelburne Farms
- (R) Snow Mountain Lodge

BETH ESTY
AND
MARYLOU
ROBINSON

SERVICES & STUFF

Best Manicure/Pedicure TOOTSIES

Burlington

HAPPY FEET

With such frisky weather, the surplus of perfect footware such as Crocs, clogs and Birkenstocks in Vermont is no surprise. But the proprietors of Tootsies know it's what's inside that counts. Underneath the scorable shoes and boots, ladies in the know hide indulged little digits that have been pampered with pedicures that smooth, massage, polish, scrub and wax their way into shape. The shoe store, co-owned by Beth Esty and Mary Lou Robinson since 2006, even offers pedicure parties for girls right out, at which clients can sip juice or BYO alcoholic libations while hunkering in a girly pepi. Along with nail services, Tootsies offers up trendy accessories ranging from purses to jewelry to "fantastic footware that will not break your budget."

CAROLYN FOX



PHOTO: MATTHEW THORSEN

Best Website Developer UNION STREET MEDIA

Burlington

Everybody's on the Internet these days. If you need a new website, or even an upgrade, Seven Days readers encourage you call Union Street Media. Founder Ted Adler started the company in 1999, its first office space was his dorm room at Middlebury College. Today USM specializes in creating websites for high-end real estate agents. It also builds e-commerce sites and provides Internet marketing services to businesses, schools and nonprofits. Last November, the Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce recognized Adler and his innovative crew with its 2008 "Entrepreneurial Spirit Award."

CATHY RESNER

SEVEN DAYSIES

2009 GUIDE TO READERS' PICKS

First-pick florist

INSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

(W) Magnificent Florist (Duxbury, Burlington)

(R) Story Cut (Burlington)

OUTSIDE CHITTENDEN COUNTY

(W) The Pink Shutter (Montpelier)

Best outdoor outfitter

(W) The Outdoor Gear Exchange (Burlington)

(R) Eastern Mountain Sports (South Burlington)

Best bike shop

(W) Wellack (Burlington)

(R) Old Spokes Home (Burlington)

Best auto dealer

(W) The Automobile of St Albans

(R) Burlington Subaru

Best real estate agency

(W) Coldwell Banker Bickel & Bordman Realty

(R) Long McLaughlin Spens Real Estate



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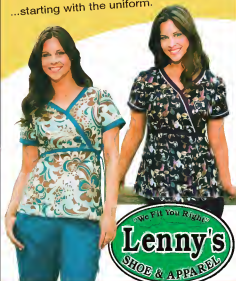
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SEVEN DAYSIES

2009 GUIDE TO READERS' PICKS

Greatest garden center

- (W) Gardeners Supply Company (Burlington, Williston)
(R) Cussons's (Colchester)

Best VT green business

- (W) Seventh Generation (Burlington)
(R) VEG (Stambridge)

Best place to do your banking

- (W) Merchants Bank
(R) New England Federal Credit Union

Best place to buy a pipe

- (W) Full Throttle (Burlington)
(R) The Barn Gallery (Burlington)

Best adult toy store

- (W) Good Stuff (Burlington, St. Albans, Waterbury Center)
(R) Image (Colchester)

Best hair salon

- (W) Indigo (Burlington)
(R) Stephen & Susan Salon, Spa and Boutique (Burlington)

Best place to get body art

- (W) Tattoos Tattoos (Burlington)
(R) Gold for Blood Tattoos (Burlington)

Best yoga studio

- (W) Evolution Physical Therapy & Yoga (Burlington)
(R) Yoga Movement (Burlington)

Best health club

- (W) Agents & Fitness Edge (South Burlington, Essex, Williston)
(R) Shelburne Health & Fitness

Most spectacular spa

- (W) Tegawatch Resort & Spa (Stowe)
(R) Stone Lake Mountain Resort & Spa (Stowe)

Best manicure/pedicure

- (W) Tootsies (Burlington)
(R) Spa at Stone Mountain Lodge



CHRIS SCHWELER

PHOTO: ANDREW DALMOND

Best Place to Buy Women's Casual/Sportswear (Inside Chittenden County); Best Outdoor Outfitter

THE OUTDOOR GEAR EXCHANGE

Burlington

TAKE A HIKE

If you're easily overwhelmed when faced with bins of hiking socks and pads on pads of waterproof jackets, the Outdoor Gear Exchange is not a safe place for you. Burlington's reigning outdoor retailer has everything you could ever want or need to outfit a trip to Mt. Mansfield or to Mt. Everest, and its customers have liked both. But you needn't be Sir Edmund Hillary to find something of interest in OGE. In fact, you don't have to be a hiker at all. The shop sells plenty of samples and factory extras of everything from yuff coats to stylish tees, dog leashes to backcountry skis. Plus, with a sizeable consignment section, you don't have to go broke getting up. Bonus: Lots of friendly pooches sitting around the store and a staff that's as good-looking and friendly as it is rugged.

LAUREN OBER

Grooviest Gift Shop (Inside Chittenden County) CANDLES & CREATIONS

South Burlington

CANDLE IN THE WIND

Dany Webster and Heather Price started their gift shop in 2007 knowing that opening a brick-and-mortar business can be risky. But their risk paid off, and today they're a go-to spot for candles of all varieties, as well as other jewelry and products to help you balance your chaos. Eclectic? Yes. New-agey? For sure. But their wares complement each other well. Would a candle to make your teenager's bedroom less acoustical? Take your pick of palm-wax sticks scented with anything from blueberry cobbler to cucumber tea. How about books on crystal therapy and the power of positive thinking? Check. A warm, fuzzy feeling is included with every purchase — 15 percent of the store's proceeds go to area charities.

LAUREN OBER



FILE PHOTO: MATTHEW THORSEN



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